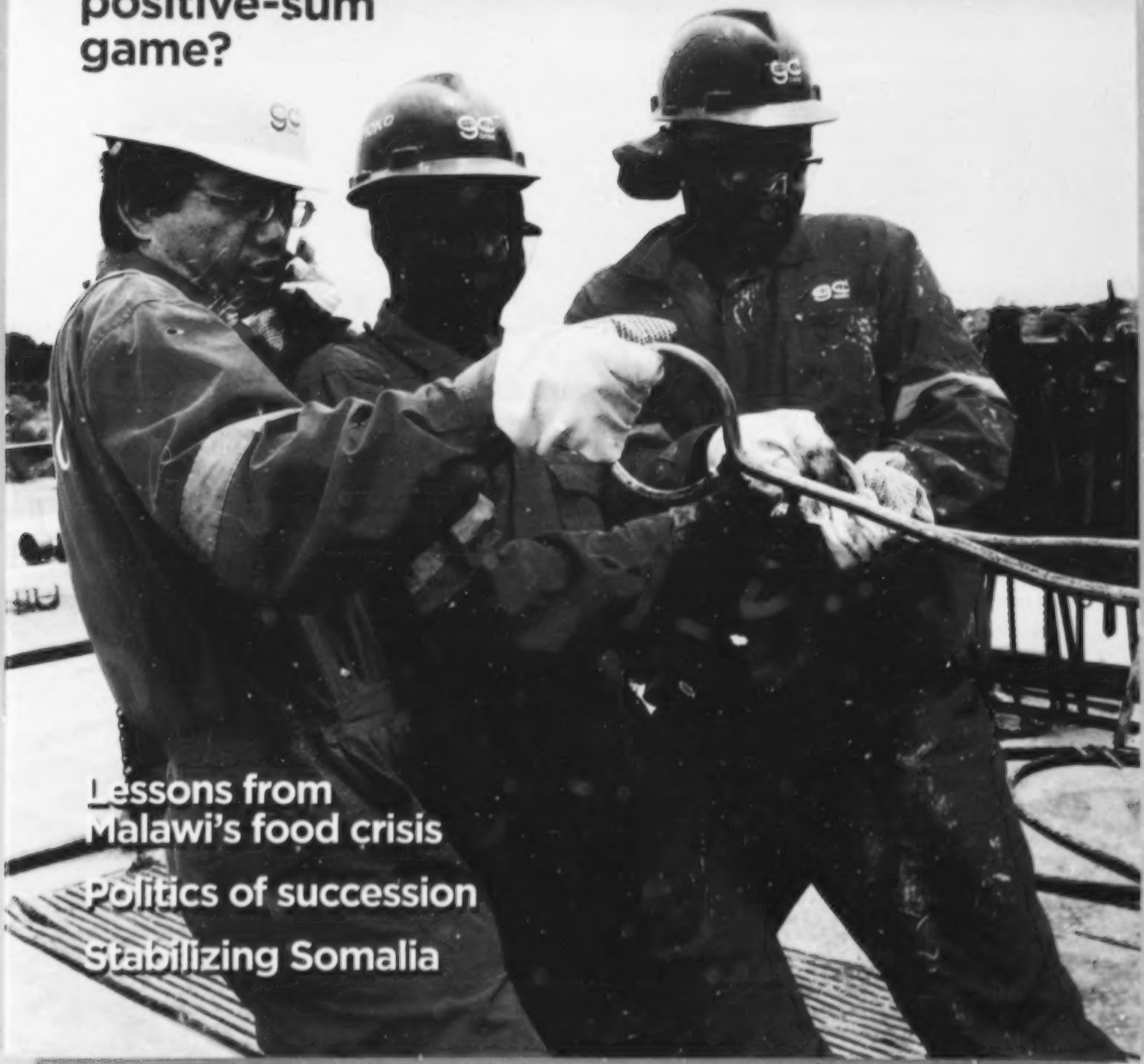
January 2013

www.un.org/africarenewal

Africa Renewal

United Nations
Department
of Public
Information

China–Africa partnership: positive-sum game?



Lessons from Malawi's food crisis

Politics of succession

Stabilizing Somalia

Contents

January 2013 | Vol. 26 No. 3

Africa Renewal
Formerly 'Africa Recovery'

6 Cover story
China in the heart of Africa
Opportunities and pitfalls in a rapidly expanding relationship

Also in this issue

3 Stabilizing Somalia: a new chapter begins
9 Lessons from Malawi's food crisis
11 Africa's food policy needs sharper teeth
12 Ghana's new path for handling oil revenue
14 Politics of succession: coping when leaders die
16 Judy Cheng-Hopkins on peacebuilding in Africa
18 Interview with Maged Abdelaziz, UN special adviser on Africa
20 Reconstructive surgery for survivors of genital cutting

Departments

23 Wired
25 Watch
26 Appointments
27 Books

Cover photo:
Chinese and Chadian oil workers side-by-side. © Ruth Fremson / The New York Times / Redux

China is working in the heart of Africa.
© Panos / Dieter Telemans

Editor-in-Chief
Masimba Tafirenyika

Managing Editor
Ernest Harsch

Staff Writers
Kingsley Ighobor
Jocelyne Sambira

Research and Media Liaison
Rebecca Moudio
Arao Ameny
Pavithra Rao

Design & Production
John Gillespie
Mulumba Lwatula

Administration
Bo Li

Distribution
Atar Markman

Africa Renewal is published in English and French by the Strategic Communications Division of the United Nations Department of Public Information. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or the publication's supporting organizations. Articles from this magazine may be freely reprinted, with attribution to the author and to "United Nations Africa Renewal," and a copy of the reproduced article would be appreciated. Copyrighted photos may not be reproduced.

© Correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editor, Africa Renewal
Room S-1032
United Nations, NY 10017-2513, USA,
Tel: (212) 963-6857, Fax: (212) 963-4556

@ E-mail:
africarenewal@un.org

Subscribe to Africa Renewal
Africa Renewal offers free subscriptions to individual readers. Please send your request to Circulation at the address to the left or by e-mail to africarenewal@un.org. Institutional subscriptions are available for thirty-five US dollars, payable by international money order or a cheque in US dollars drawn on a US bank, to the "United Nations" and sent to Circulation at the address to the left.

www.un.org/africarenewal
facebook.com/africarenewal
twitter.com/africarenewal

Africa Renewal is published by the United Nations, New York, on recycled paper.

Stabilizing Somalia: a new chapter begins

Two students from Mogadishu University using a laptop for their studies. After decades of war, many Somalis are now able to get on with their lives.

Panos / Sven Torfinn

A "make or break" point for the country's new leaders

By Jocelyne Sambira

When a Turkish Airlines flight touched down at Aden Adde International Airport near the Somali capital of Mogadishu on 16 March, it seemed like a sign of good things to come. It was the first time in more than 20 years that a passenger plane from Europe had flown into the volatile city. Today, more than half a year later, the country has a parliament, a provisional constitution, a new president and a prime minister.

Once labelled "the most dangerous city in the world," Mogadishu is now bustling with activity. Cars and people fill the streets and the sound of hammers has replaced that of guns, Augustine Mahiga, the UN special representative to Somalia, told reporters in Nairobi. When he first visited the city in 2010, it was a ghost town, he said. The only vehicles he could see on the roads were military trucks and an occasional donkey cart. "There wasn't a single building that didn't have bullet holes, and most had been destroyed." While he was meeting with a Somali leader, for two or three hours "it was just the sounds of guns, guns of different calibres, small guns, big guns and big booms..."

Mogadishu has been free from the iron grip of the Al-Shabaab rebel group since August 2011, when it was flushed out by forces of the Somalia Transitional Federal Government with the help of troops from the 9,000-strong African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). While tens of thousands of people were uprooted by the fighting, the insurgents were pushed further into south and central Somalia. At the time, a famine was quickly spreading across the country, with around 3.8 million people in dire need of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Repainting an historical arch in Mogadishu, as Somalia's capital begins to rebuild from the war.

Panos / Sven Torfinn

Affairs (OCHA). Al-Shabaab's decision to ban several aid groups from areas it controlled further eroded its support.

Already weakened, Al-Shabaab forces lost another strategic city, Kismayo, in early October, after a new offensive by AMISOM and Somali government forces. For the past five years, the the rebel force had used the port city in southern Somalia as a lifeline to resupply itself and export charcoal to gain revenue for its operations. Kismayo's capture has been a major blow to the group, which is linked to Al-Qaeda.

A vote for change

A UN-backed plan known as the "Roadmap for the End of the Transition" has been lauded for breaking an eight-year political deadlock in Somalia. The Roadmap spelled out priority measures to end the transition by 20 August 2012 and restore stability to the country. After the dissolution of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was established in 2004, strenuous negotiations between political actors in Somalia took place to adopt a provisional constitution, elect a new parliament, and appoint a new president and prime minister. Some politicians were bent on maintaining the status quo in order to extend their own mandates. Increased pressure by the UN Security Council, which threatened "stringent action" against any "continued obstruction," helped move the process forward.

So for the first time since the collapse of the government of Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991, a new federal parliament was selected. Since security conditions still did not allow for general elections, 135 traditional elders from various clans and regions convened in Mogadishu to elect 275 members of parliament, including women, by secret ballot. Somali elders are influential leaders chosen by their communities to serve for life.

This move gave "legitimacy" to the process, says Mr. Mahiga. However, the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank, begged to differ, describing the selection process as "undemocratic" and marred by "unprecedented levels of political interference, corruption and intimidation."

The UN envoy had earlier urged the elders to use the power of the secret ballot: "Between you and the box, it is only God watching you." The new legislators seemed to take the advice to heart. They surprised most Somalis by voting in a new kind of leadership. They chose Professor Mohammed Oswan Jawari, an attorney with a strong track record in public service, as the new speaker. And they elected a political outsider, Hassan Sheikh Mahmud, to the highest office on 10 September, a clear break from former president Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, a familiar figure on the Somali political scene and former commander of the Islamic Courts Union (Al-Shabaab was formed in a split away from his group). In contrast, Mr. Mahmud, an academic and activist, had only launched his political career a year before with his Peace and Development Party. President Mahmud in turn appointed as his prime minister Abdi Farah Shirdon, an economist and businessman who has vowed to fight nepotism and corruption.

More recently, Mr. Shirdon named Fauzia Yusuf Haji Adan as his deputy and the country's new foreign minister. It is the first time a woman has held such high positions in Somalia.

Abdul Sharif, a Somali-American freelance journalist and Africa analyst based in Minnesota in the US, was pleasantly surprised by the outcome. "The Somali people have taken a great step forward on the path to prosperity. Many people thought the transitional government would not end, that it was going to be a failure. But the Somali people proved many wrong."

Good for business

Having survived an assassination attempt by suicide bombers just 48 hours after taking office, President Mahmud made clear his number-one priority:

"Security, security, security." Although Al-Shabaab is in retreat, the group still poses a threat around Mogadishu, the recently liberated Kismayo and other areas in south-central Somalia.

Abdirashid Duale, the chief executive of Dahabshiil, the largest money-transfer business in the Horn of Africa, knows only too well the cost of doing business in Somalia. After two decades of serving the residents of Mogadishu, his offices have not been spared from the violence. In 2009, an Al-Shabaab attack that took the lives of some of his staff forced him to close some outlets. But his remaining 29 offices in Mogadishu still serve as a lifeline for many.

Such attacks have so far not stopped the commercial boom the capital is experiencing. Dahabshiil has seen a 20 per cent rise in its Mogadishu transactions in recent months, and the Somali shilling has been getting stronger against the dollar, Mr. Duale wrote to *Africa Renewal*. "We have noticed that some of our customers are rebuilding their properties. There is also a high demand for rental properties, especially for business premises." He notes there are now daily flights to Mogadishu packed with people from the Somali diaspora returning to invest in their homeland.

Mr. Sharif from Minnesota is looking forward to joining his grandmother, who has been living in Hamarweyme, a relatively safe area of Mogadishu. "Somalia is making one of the biggest transformations since the war in 1991. We need to give this government more of a chance to see what it is going to do, rather than criticize."

Strengthening security

Many people with a vested interest in a peaceful future for Somalia agree that strengthening and reforming the national security forces is essential to keeping the momentum going. The African Union is pushing for the UN Security Council to lift its arms embargo on Somalia, while at the same time keeping it in force against non-state actors. The AU is also asking for an expansion of the UN support package to Somalia, as well as for help in financing the full deployment of military personnel for AMISOM, to reach its agreed level of 12,000 troops.

Installing a sign at one of the first commercial banks to reopen in Mogadishu, Somalia. Panos / Sven Torfinn

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has agreed with President Mahmud to start peacebuilding activities. Mr. Ban wants the UN to establish a "heavy footprint" in the country, meaning he wants to have all relevant UN agencies, funds and programmes move to Somalia by January 2013 (most have been operating from neighbouring Kenya).

Restoring basic services such as water, education and health is also crucial to the new government's success, Maxamed Ibrahim, a graduate student of international development at the University of Vermont in the US, told *Africa Renewal*. He is from Bardera, an agricultural city connected to the port of Kismayo. He left Somalia in 1995 and has not been back since. He remains a bit skeptical about the country's future. Clan warfare, corruption, security challenges and the aftermath of the famine are problems carried over from the previous administration. "No one talks about reforming the army, paying taxes.... Does the government actually have money to do this? As for AMISOM, military victory is almost all they talk about. But once they capture a city, what's next? Nobody really talks a lot about that. The AU troops are already stretched too thin and the government does not talk about services. People will turn to Al-Shabaab for security and services if they don't get them from the government."

As of January 2012 there were an estimated 184,000 internally displaced people living in Mogadishu, says Russell Geekie of OCHA. A new estimate of well over 200,000 was expected by the end of 2012. The government's immediate challenge now is to establish local and district administrations, justice and the rule of law. Then it will be in a better position to provide for local populations.

For now, Mr. Ibrahim believes that the Somali people are "tired of groups like Al-Shabaab." As long as the Somali people remain in control of any future stabilization effort, he concludes, they will be "tolerant" and will give the new government time to resolve longstanding problems.

China in the heart of Africa

Railway and train station construction site in Angola, part of an agreement in which China helps build infrastructure in exchange for oil. With trade between Africa and China reaching $166 billion in 2011, the relationship is one of "give and take."

Panos / Dieter Telemans

Opportunities and pitfalls in a rapidly expanding relationship

By Kingsley Ighobor

"China's gift to Africa." The new headquarters of the African Union, a towering 20-storey building in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, is so called because China picked up the $200 million tab for the state-of-the-art complex. Ethiopia's tallest building, completed in December 2011 in time for an AU summit the following month, includes a 2,500-seat conference hall. The gift prompted Ethiopia's late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to refer to Africa's current economic boom as a "renaissance," due partly to China's "amazing re-emergence and its commitments to a win-win partnership with Africa."

Not all Africans have welcomed China's gift. West African political commentator Chika Ezeanya considers it an "insult to the AU and to every African that in 2012 a building as symbolic as the AU headquarters is designed, built and maintained by a foreign country." However, as African leaders savoured the swanky complex in January, they took turns thanking China.

China's largess to Africa is not new. Previously China had either donated or assisted in building a hospital in Luanda, Angola; a road from Lusaka, Zambia's capital, to Chirundu in the southeast; stadiums in Sierra Leone and Benin; a sugar mill and a sugarcane farm in Mali; and a water supply project in Mauritania, among other projects. At the fifth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, held in Beijing in July 2012, Chinese President Hu Jintao listed yet more, including 100 schools, 30 hospitals, 30 anti-malaria centres and 20 agricultural technology demonstration centres.

African leaders continue to insist that the relationship with China is not a one-way street and that it includes more trade than aid. Indeed, trade between Africa and China was $166 billion in 2011, according to the *Economist*, a UK weekly. "The good thing about this partnership is that it's a give and take," Faida Mitifu, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's ambassador to the US, told the Reuters news agency.

Eye on the pie

What then is China taking? In *China Returns to Africa*, a collection of essays published by Columbia University Press, the editors Chris Alden, Daniel Large and Ricardo Soares de Oliveira note, "The overarching driver has been the Chinese government's strategic pursuit of resources and attempts to ensure raw material supplies for growing energy needs within China." The world's second-biggest economy currently buys more than one-third of Africa's oil.

In addition, China's industries are getting raw materials such as coal from South Africa, iron ore from Gabon, timber from Equatorial Guinea and copper from Zambia.

Chinese industries also require new markets for their products and Africa is a potentially enormous outlet. "China is repositioning itself continuously for the new Africa that's emerging," says Kobus van der Wath, founder of Beijing Axis, an international advisory and procurement firm based in Beijing.

Chinese products have flooded markets in Johannesburg, Luanda, Lagos, Cairo, Dakar and other cities, towns and villages in Africa. Those goods include clothing, jewellery, electronics, building materials and much more. "Even little things like matches, tea bags, children's toys and bathing soaps are coming from China," says Bankole Aluwe of Alaba market in Lagos, Nigeria.

African consumers like Chinese products because they are affordable. "Chinese goods are cheaper than those from Europe and North America. In our business, price is very important to customers," Mr. Aluwe says.

Largest trading partner

In an article in *This Is Africa*, a *Financial Times* publication, Sven Grimm and Daouda Cissé state that in recent years China's economy at times has grown at more than 10 per cent a year, while cheap labour has helped reduce production costs — hence cheaper products. They also note, "The low level of the yuan [the Chinese currency] compared to the other major world trading currencies such as the US dollar, the euro and the yen" attracts African importers.

Already trade between Africa and China has grown at a breathtaking pace. It was $10.5 billion in 2000, $40 billion in 2005 and $166 billion in 2011. China is currently Africa's largest trading partner, having surpassed the US in 2009. The Chinese government is eager to cement China's dominance by burnishing its image through initiatives such as a $20 billion credit to African countries to develop infrastructure and the African Talents Programme, which is intended to train 30,000 Africans in various sectors.

Groundbreaking ceremony for a stadium in Lusaka, Zambia, to be built by a Chinese company: Sometimes language and other cultural differences can contribute to social tensions. Thomas Lekfeldt / Moment / Redux

China's give-and-take relationship also plays out in other forms. Chinese construction firms are acquiring enormous construction contracts. The China Railway Construction Corp. (CRC) signed a $1.5 billion contract in September 2012 to modernize a railway system in western Nigeria. That same month, China South Locomotive and Rolling Stock Corporation, the largest train manufacturer in China, signed a $400 million deal to supply locomotives to a South African firm, Transnet. In February 2012 the CRC announced projects in Nigeria, Djibouti and Ethiopia worth about $1.5 billion in total.

Not all is rosy

China's inroads into Africa's agricultural sector include the 20 demonstration centres that President Hu said will "help African countries increase production capacity." But there was a backlash when the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo leased thousands of unutilized hectares of land to ZTE International, a Chinese company, in a deal that Oxfam, a UK charity, and others have labelled a "land grab."

The "land grab" accusation may be overstated, according to a study by the UK's Standard Chartered Bank. But the authors of the study believe that in the longer term China could well seek to import much more food from Africa which, by World Bank estimates, has 60 per cent of the world's uncultivated land. "Given Africa's potential, China is likely to turn towards it."

The furore over land adds to growing criticisms of the manner of China's aggressive Africa penetration. Many Africans often refer to the poor quality of Chinese products and blame their low prices for the collapse of local industries. Comatex and Batexci, two leading textile companies in Mali, have been severely affected by cheap fabrics from Asia (see *Africa Renewal* April 2012). "Hundreds of textile factories collapsed across Nigeria because they could not compete with cheap Chinese garments," noted the *Economist*, which approvingly added that the Tanzanian government has stopped Chinese from selling in that country's markets. Chinese are welcome as investors, but not as "vendors or shoe

A worker hauling a bag of rice at a Chinese-owned supermarket in South Africa: Chinese products have flooded markets across Africa, benefiting consumers but sometimes driving African manufacturers out of business.

Africa Media Online / Jonathan Katsenellenbogen

shiners," said the *Economist*. In May, Neil Bruce, head of Zimbabwe's Furniture Manufacturers Association, told the country's parliament that imported Chinese furniture, "which is not strong," is crippling the local furniture industry.

Performance assessments of some Chinese investors have not been stellar. The managers of Chinese-run mines in Zambia have been accused of not taking adequate safety measures for their local workers. A Chinese oil firm is exploring in a Gabonese national park, angering environmentalists.

Bridging the culture gap

On the flip side, Chinese investors face huge challenges in Africa. In an article in the *Globe and Mail*, a Canadian newspaper, David Berman maintained that cultural differences between Chinese and Africans, including the language barriers, often lead to social tensions, and that poor infrastructure in Africa makes business operations difficult. Frequent power outages in some countries raise production costs, while policies towards businesses are inconsistent. African governments can raise taxes at a whim. And most African economies are still fragile, subject to shocks from the global economy.

China hopes to minimize social tensions by bridging the information gap. Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, has increased its bureaus in Africa to more than 20. In 2008 the China Africa News service was launched, to report "China-Africa news stories from African, Chinese and Western sources." In early 2012 China Central Television (CCTV) opened a broadcast hub in Nairobi, Kenya — its first outside of its Beijing headquarters. Its strategy has been to hire some of Africa's brightest journalists to report on Africa to viewers in about 170 countries.

"We have the news of what is happening in Africa, we tell a positive story," says Pang Xinhua, the CCTV managing editor. But Yu-Shan Wu, a researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs, sees a broader motive. "China is actively introducing its culture and values," she says, and calls the push "the rise of China's state-led media dynasty in Africa."

Western concerns

In the view of David Shinn, former US ambassador to Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, the West is nervous about China's activities in Africa. Mr. Shinn adds that China's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of African countries and its fast approach to aid delivery make it more attractive than Western donors, whose aid often comes with demands to improve human rights and democracy.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently warned against a "new colonialism in Africa," in which it is "easy to come in, take out natural resources, pay off leaders and leave." It was a veiled jab at China, according to the *Guardian*, a UK newspaper. But Ms. Clinton's point echoed across the continent, and it appears that African leaders are now treading cautiously.

South African President Jacob Zuma warned in July that the current "unbalanced" trade pattern is unsustainable. He was referring to the tendency of Africa to export raw materials to China while largely importing only cheap manufactured goods. Maged Abdelaziz, the UN Secretary-General's special adviser on Africa, told *Africa Renewal* that the continent must develop a strategy for its dealings with emerging economic giants such as China, Brazil and India.

Along this line, talks began in South Africa in June 2011 to merge three regional trade groupings (the East African Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Southern African Development Community) into a "grand free trade area" incorporating 26 countries with a combined gross domestic product of $1 trillion. Such a combined strength could give Africa a more assertive voice at the negotiating table.

The China-Africa relationship will get stronger. The editors of *China Returns to Africa* sum it up: So long as Africa's development requires huge foreign investments, so long will China continue to be relevant. "Irrespective of the concerns being voiced in some circles in Africa, Chinese involvement is widely considered to be a positive-sum game."

What went wrong? Lessons from Malawi's food crisis

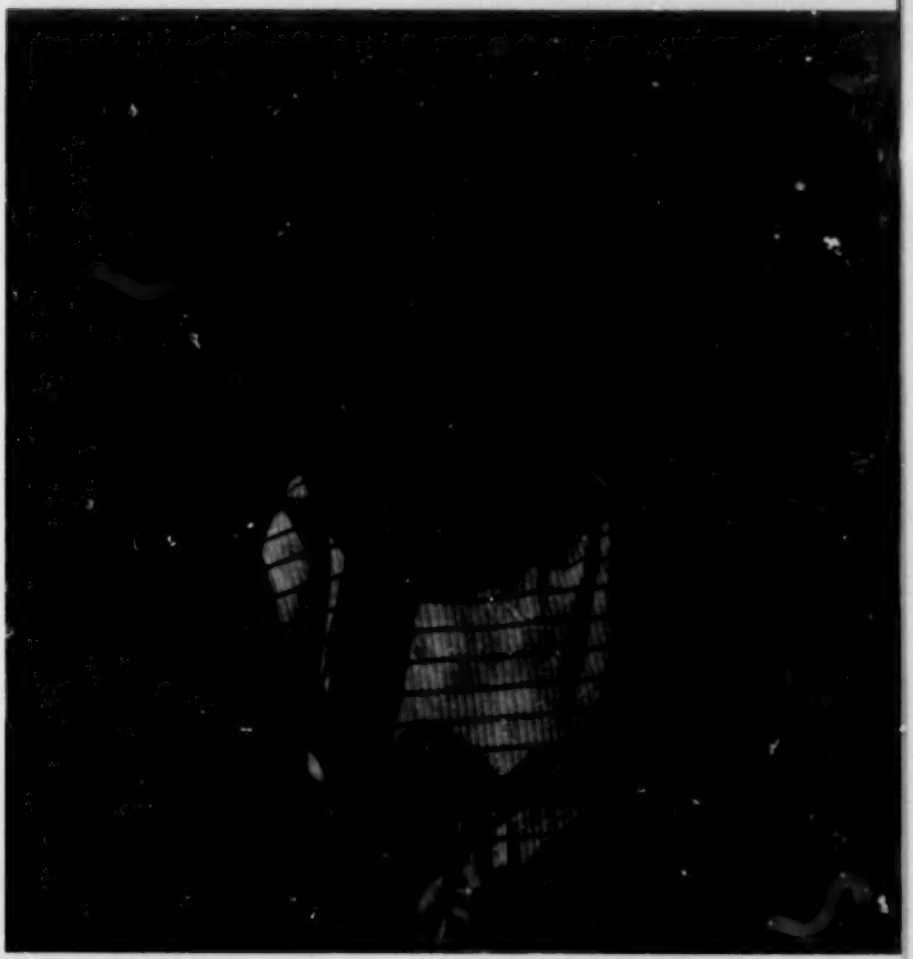
Autocracy and aid dependency killed an agriculture success story

By Masimba Tafirenyika

Once again Malawi finds itself in a tight spot. A food crisis set off by erratic rains, rising food prices and economic hardships is slowly unfolding. For the first time in several years, the country's ability to feed its citizens is at risk. Sadly and unexpectedly, Malawi has lost its hard-earned status as an agricultural success story — it used to produce enough maize for its people to eat and still provide a surplus to neighbours. Many are now wondering what went wrong and whether there could be lessons for other African countries.

More than 1.63 million people, or 11 per cent of the population, are facing severe food shortages, according to the World Food Programme, a UN relief agency. Malawi needed $30 million to the end of 2012 to cover the shortfall. Agriculture is the backbone of its economy: four in five people rely on it for income. Most farmers plant on small plots by hand with little irrigation, and therefore are vulnerable to recurring droughts, notes the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Malawi is home to Africa's third-largest freshwater lake — Lake Malawi — yet less than 3 per cent of the land is irrigated.

Malawi's current troubles might seem surprising. Yet to those who follow events in the tiny, poor and densely populated landlocked Southern African nation, it is less an abrupt change in fortunes than a series of self-inflicted injuries unfolding in slow motion.



Malawi has gone from bountiful maize crops to renewed uncertainty. Strong, democratic leadership and sound policies are essential for ensuring food security

Africa Media Online / South Photos / Graeme Williams

Increased farm subsidies

Back in 2004, President Bingu wa Mutharika, who died in office in early 2012, rode into power on a promise to increase farm subsidies as part of his Farm Input Subsidy Programme. Under the plan, the government gave subsidy vouchers to "smallholders to buy a small amount of fertilizer and seed so that they could replenish the soil nutrients, take advantage of improved seed varieties and at least achieve a livable crop from their tiny farms," says *Africa Confidential*, a UK-based newsletter. The vouchers were redeemable for seeds and fertilizer at about one-third of the normal cash cost.

The results were instant. In 2005, a year after expanded subsidies kicked in, Malawi harvested a grain surplus of half a million tonnes. In subsequent years it exported grain to Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as 400,000 tonnes of maize to Zimbabwe. Food experts and advocacy groups took turns at international forums extolling Malawi as an example of Africa's "green revolution." Exploiting his new-found success, President Mutharika called on other African leaders to embrace his policies. Now the tables have turned, and Malawi is facing severe food shortages.

Ironically, even during the years of plenty, Malawi continued to import large quantities of wheat, maize and other cereals, says FAO, and isolated pockets of hunger remained. In pursuing subsidies, Mutharika defied donor critics who alleged that the programme was riddled with corruption, ran counter to the principles of free markets and was unsustainable. Indeed, by 2009 the government was spending 16 per cent of its budget on subsidies.

Over time President Mutharika became autocratic, amid charges of corruption and cronyism. In 2009 he spent more than $20 million on a long-range presidential jet. Worse, he started promoting his brother Peter, then foreign minister, as his successor, further alienating donors, on whom Malawi depends. As the donors abandoned him, the economy tanked and protesters took to the streets, leading to political instability.

Leadership is key

Now that a previously successful experiment with an "African green revolution" is unraveling, what are the lessons for others? With a population of more than a billion and counting, will Africa ever be able to produce enough food for its people? The answer to that question is a qualified yes. But for it to happen, certain conditions must exist.

First, an essential ingredient for success in agriculture is strong political will at the highest level. In his book *The New Harvest: Agricultural Innovation in Africa*, Calestous Juma, a Harvard University professor originally from Kenya, argues that African leaders should make agriculture a key element of all major economic decisions.

Rhoda Tumusiime, the head of agriculture at the African Union Commission, agrees. She notes that while success in agriculture does not have many drivers, leadership is crucial. "There must be a key political champion at head-of-state level to steer and champion a vision on agricultural revolution," she told the Economic Commission for Africa.

Mr. Mutharika not only had the political will, but tried to lead by example. And his anti-poverty policies attracted many advocates. The director of the New York–based Earth Institute at Columbia University, Jeffrey Sachs, who has worked closely with Malawian authorities to fight poverty, is among them. "We should ... remember a positive legacy of the late president Mutharika, because that legacy holds a key for Africa's future development and escape from poverty," Sachs wrote in an op-ed in the *New York Times*.

"Until his final two years, Mutharika had actually engineered an agriculture-led boom in Malawi, one that pointed a way for Africa to overcome its chronic hunger, food insecurity, and periodic extreme famines," said Sachs. He credited the late president for standing "bravely against the arrogance of an ill-informed foreign aid community back in 2005."

Food security equals national security

Second, while foreign aid is critical in feeding the hungry and reviving agriculture in Africa, food security is too important to be left to the generosity of external partners. Food security requires the same seriousness and resources as national security, if not more. In fact, national security loses its legitimacy if thousands of citizens die not from enemy firepower but from starvation, or risk their lives crossing borders while fleeing from hunger.

And finally, Africa needs a strong food policy backed by resources from African Union members, to be invested in institutions that promote agriculture. One tangible AU response has been the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), which requires countries that sign up to it to spend at least 10 per cent of their national budgets on agriculture (see page 11). CAADP itself has a very small budget, but it uses the little it has to strengthen agricultural institutions and build teams of skilled personnel who roam the continent sharing best practices with national authorities.

"There is no doubt that African agriculture needs strong local institutions to avoid the kind of bubble that we saw in Malawi, which was largely driven by external energy," Martin Bwalya, the head of CAADP, told *Africa Renewal*, alluding to Malawi's dependence on donors for its short-lived success. CAADP, which is run by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the AU's development agency, recognizes that Africa needs institutions whose effectiveness and shelf-life do not depend on the survival of individuals.

Mr. Mutharika tried to follow the path of subsidies and largely succeeded. Countries that have pursued Malawi's lead have "achieve[d] breakthroughs in farm yields and food production for the first time in their modern history," said Professor Sachs. Mr. Mutharika's successor, Joyce Banda, Africa's third female president, now has to formulate a new food policy, woo back the donors, stabilize the economy and again get agriculture back on track.

Africa's food policy needs sharper teeth

Good intentions alone are not enough

By Masimba Tafirenyika

Amid raving economic forecasts that Africa will be the next big emerging market, chronic food shortages remain stubbornly immune to solutions. The African Union is aware of this weak link and is working to convince its members to boost investments in agriculture.

It's a tall order. But there are signs of progress, thanks in part to an innovative plan by the AU's development agency, NEPAD, called the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

CAADP's message is simple but powerful: More investments in agriculture will end hunger and lift millions out of poverty. The programme has several elements, but the best-known requires signatories to spend at least 10 per cent of their budgets on agriculture. To date, 30 countries have signed up.

CAADP's scorecard so far is mixed. Some countries are still grappling with the teething troubles of translating its plans into action. But those that have faithfully followed the programme are seeing positive changes.

CAADP is a noble idea. Yet it suffers from two major weaknesses: It doesn't have enough money to back its plan and it has no power to compel members to adopt its recommendations.

To boost African agriculture, governments need to invest 10 per cent or more of their budgets in the sector.

Africa Media Online / Eimage Agency / Brandon Fisher

Take the European Union's farm subsidy programme, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), for instance, which was created in response to severe food shortages in Europe back in the 1950s. CAP has money — in 2010 it was gobbling up about 40 per cent of the EU's budget — and the power to impose conditions on members that get subsidies. True, EU subsidies hurt farmers in poor nations, but they have raised the incomes of EU farmers and produced more quality food for consumers.

In contrast, CAADP uses moral suasion to induce members to stick to their commitments. Worse still, it relies heavily on donors for investments in countries that have signed on. Equally troubling is that a big chunk of the national budgets of most CAADP signatories comes from donors, subjecting Africa to aid cuts whenever donor economies slump or priorities shift, or when domestic African political fortunes change, as events in Malawi, Rwanda and elsewhere have clearly shown.

CAADP can be effective, but only to the extent that signatories are committed to doing the necessary heavy lifting. To demonstrate its commitment to food security, the AU should move beyond platitudes and follow the EU's example — make it mandatory for members to contribute to a common fund for agriculture. Each member's contribution could be based on its ability to pay, perhaps using GDP per capita as a guide. Such a fund could then be used to reduce CAADP's dependence on donors.

True, setting aside a tenth of the budget for agriculture is a big deal for poor countries often faced with competing priorities. But success in agriculture reduces the pressure to finance solutions to social problems caused by hunger and poverty. Putting money into agriculture is a smart investment.

Ghana's 'new path' for handling oil revenue

Seeking to avoid the ill effects of Africa's resource "curse"

By **Efam Dovi** Accra

Filling a truck with diesel fuel at a Ghana Oil station in Accra. One of Africa's newest oil producers, Ghana has put into place laws and institutions to help ensure that oil revenues are not wasted or diverted, but benefit the country's development.

Panos / Jenny Matthews

When the oil rigs started pumping crude off the coast of Ghana's Western Region in December 2009, many people hoped for better living standards and development. But some worried that the country did not have the necessary laws to properly manage the new revenues. They wondered whether Ghana would be able to break the "curse" that has often marked Africa's oil and mining industries: decades of extraction that often saw only a few getting richer but the majority getting poorer, economic distortions caused by improperly managed resource wealth and hardly any money set aside for times when commodity prices dip or the wells dry up.

For Ghana, examples of such problems are very close to home. Nigeria, its West African neighbour – and the continent's largest crude producer — saw successive governments deplete the estimated $400 billion earned from crude oil sales since the 1970s. Besides, Ghana's own record in managing mineral revenues after a hundred years of gold mining was not the best.

But it seems that a new dawn has broken. Steve Manteaw of the Civil Society Platform on Oil and Gas — a coalition of civil society groups that promotes transparent and accountable management of oil and mineral wealth — told *Africa Renewal* that "Ghana is on the right path because it has in place a law that governs how the oil revenue is collected and managed."

Emmanuel Kuyole, Africa regional coordinator of the Revenue Watch Institute, an international non-profit policy body headquartered in New York but with a major office in Ghana, hopes that this law "can stand the test of time."

Law an 'innovation'

Experts have described Ghana's Revenue Management Act — passed more than a year after the first oil was pumped from the country's Jubilee Field — as an "innovation." The law outlines clear mechanisms for collecting and distributing petroleum revenue. It specifies what percentage should help fund the annual budget, what should be set aside for future generations and what should be invested for a rainy day.

Petroleum revenue contributed 4 per cent of the government's total capital spending in 2011. The funds went mainly to investments in road infrastructure, but also to building the capacity of the oil and gas sector, repaying loans and strengthening agriculture, most notably for fertilizer subsidies.

As Mr. Kuyole told *Africa Renewal*, "The law has made it possible to ensure that all revenues collected

from petroleum production are being accounted for, because the money goes into one particular fund before disbursement is done. Without such a law in place, it would be virtually impossible to monitor receipts from the sector."

In devising its law, Ghana borrowed from best practices in Norway, Timor-Leste and Trinidad and Tobago, which have developed laws to better govern oil and gas exploration and production, and to manage the revenues.

Independent oversight

Rarely are citizens' groups given a chance to oversee how natural resource revenue is managed in Africa. That is why experts have hailed the creation of Ghana's Public Interest and Accountability Committee (PIAC) under the provisions of the petroleum revenue law. Civil society groups lobbied vigorously for the 13-member committee. With membership drawn from organized professional bodies, think tanks, pressure groups and traditional institutions, among others, the body serves as a platform for public debate on how petroleum revenues are spent.

The PIAC also monitors and evaluates compliance with the law by the government and other institutions, provides an independent assessment of petroleum production and receipts, and publishes its findings in half-year and annual reports. A report issued in May 2012 covering oil production in 2011 found that its revenues provided the government with considerable fiscal relief, thereby enabling it to shift more funds into development programmes. But it also noted that the government did not fully comply with all the law's provisions. The Revenue Watch Institute commented that the report "sets new standards for accountability."

The law alone, experts say, does not solve all the problems. Mr. Kuyole notes that it needs to be backed by appropriate regulations determining how the government spends its annual budgetary allocation, among other things.

Continuing challenges

African governments often lack the capacity to effectively monitor resource production, and thereby to determine accurately how much revenue they are owed. Yusupha Crookes, the World Bank's country director in Ghana, recently commented, "A mining fiscal regime is only as effective as the combined administrative capacity of the government institutions charged with enforcing it."

Mr. Crookes argued that "it is important to have systems and processes in place to effectively address oil, gas and mining tax payments administration," since "the general tax system may not be efficient enough for the extractive sector."

Mr. Kuyole of the Revenue Watch Institute agrees. In Ghana's case, he stresses the need to put in place all the various committees provided for by the law, and to strengthen institutions like the Petroleum Commission and the unit of the Ghana Revenue Authority involved in monitoring production and the determination of revenue.

Ghana may need to look at how revenue paid by mining companies is determined and at who is calling the shots, says Kwaku Boa-Amponsem of Boas and Associate, the lead consultant for the Ghana Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative's multi-stakeholders group.

Sometimes all that is needed is to make the law clearer. In Ghana, complexities under the tax law in computing mining royalties meant that firms paid the lowest rate for many years. After a review of the law last year, revenues are now expected to increase substantially.

New frontiers

Across Africa new oil fields are being discovered. Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Mauritania have all discovered oil in commercial quantities. And in the last couple of years new discoveries have been made in Angola, Cameroon, Gabon, Niger and Sierra Leone, while extensive exploration is ongoing in a number of others. East African neighbours Kenya and Uganda are poised to become major oil producers in the near future.

Dr. Manteaw of the Civil Society Platform on Oil and Gas thinks there are lessons for Ghana and for African oil-producing countries more generally. "Where countries have effectively used natural resources to transform their economies and the lives of their people," he points out, "the countries themselves have been active participants in the sector and work towards ownership by buying shares in the producer firms or reinvesting the revenue and living off the dividends, like Botswana."

Professor Paul Collier, director of the International Growth Centre, a UK research institute, expressed similar views during a recent visit to Liberia. He said that the discovery of oil there could either end poverty or increase it, depending on which road Liberians follow: "If you find yourself at the crossroads, it's your determination that can lead you to the case of Botswana or Ghana and not other worse oil scenarios in the world."

After decades of oil production and billions of dollars in revenue unaccounted for, Nigerians are hoping that the country's new Sovereign Wealth Fund — if managed well — will improve living standards. Angola, Africa's second largest oil producer, is also considering setting up such a fund.

Overall, Mr. Manteaw argues, the processing of licences and negotiation of contracts in Ghana and other countries "must be made transparent through competitive bidding." For its part, Ghana has started well and needs to stay the course, he says. "Doing for mining what Ghana has done for oil should be the future for managing the wealth from Africa's vast natural resources."

Politics of succession: coping when leaders die

Billboard in Accra, Ghana, marking the death of President John Atta Mills in July 2012: The vacancy was filled without any political problems, as power passed smoothly, according to constitutional norms, to the then vice-president, John Mahama. 📷 AP / Christian Thompson

To avoid chaos, countries must follow constitutional procedures

By Kingsley Ighobor

In December 2008, a Guinean newspaper published a photo of a frail and ailing President Lansana Conté, who appeared to be struggling to stand up. The photo stoked rumours of the president's ill health. Its publication also angered the country's political elite, who hastily ordered the editor's arrest. By the next day, on the instructions of security operatives, the publication's front page carried an even bigger photo of Mr. Conté — this time smiling broadly and looking spirited. But he died just a week later, justifying the newspaper's initial resolve to let Guineans know that his health was failing.

The head of the National Assembly, Aboubacar Somparé, later explained that leaders hid the president's "physical suffering in order to give happiness to Guinea." Mr. Somparé's clumsy explanation implied a need to avoid succession squabbles and potential violence. Yet six hours after the president's death was officially announced, the army staged a coup, suspended the constitution and threw the West African nation into political turmoil.

Succession squabbles

While Guinea's military, after a period of chaos and yet another coup, eventually organized democratic elections, the muddled aftermath of Conté's death draws attention to the broader issue of how African nations manage successions when their leaders die in service. Ten of the 13 world leaders who have died in office since 2009 were African. In 2012 alone, presidents Malam Bacai Sanha of Guinea-Bissau, John Atta Mills of Ghana and Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi, as well as Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, have all died.

Some countries have handled succession better than others. As chaotic as they were, the developments in Guinea were not as dire as the more recent situation in Guinea-Bissau. Since President Sanha died in January from an illness, the country has been embroiled in an ongoing transition crisis, with the military mostly controlling the affairs of state.

Malawi, on the other hand, had a relatively successful transition after 78-year-old President Mutharika's fatal heart attack in April. But the process could have gone off the rails when some cabinet members tried to have the late president's younger brother, Foreign Minister Peter Mutharika, sworn in, instead of Joyce Banda, the vice-president and

constitutionally designated successor. This effort followed the late president's expulsion of Ms. Banda from the ruling party to pave the way for his brother. When he died the political class was divided between those who cited the late leader's intentions and those who wanted to follow the constitution. Many Malawians agitated against any deviation from the constitution, supported by donors, including a strong message from the US State Department: "We trust that the vice-president, who is next in line, will be sworn in shortly." And she soon was.

It is important to avoid such succession problems, argues Tesfaye Habisso, an Ethiopian writer and former diplomat. "Stability, predictability and continuity in leadership are important ingredients of good governance and are assured by a well-planned and -managed succession strategy."

The rule of law

Succession strategies need to be strictly constitutional, argues a 2011 report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a US think tank. The report specifically draws attention to oil-rich Angola, governed since 1979 by José Eduardo dos Santos, who is now 70. While the country is now at peace, and its economy is growing, the CSIS report expresses concern that the established rules of succession could be violated because of infighting within the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). Some MPLA factions oppose the current vice-president.

Most African countries' constitutions specify that when a leader dies in office, his or her deputy or the head of the national assembly will step in until an election can be held. Some leaders, however, expect the designated "heir apparent" to display fawning personal loyalty. If he or she does not, political conflict can arise. In Nigeria, for example, Vice-President Atiku Abubakar had a frosty relationship with then President Olusegun Obasanjo, who wasted no time arranging Mr. Abubakar's expulsion from the ruling party.

Some African leaders have groomed relatives as successors. When President Omar Bongo of Gabon died in 2009, the ruling party named his son, Ali Bongo Ondimba, who was foreign and defence minister, as the new president. Presidents Faure Gnassingbé of Togo and Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo succeeded their deceased fathers.

Yet picking a relative can spark a revolt, maintains the CSIS report, citing the case of Egypt, where President Hosni Mubarak's intention to install his son as his successor added to the opposition that erupted in the revolution of early 2011. In Burkina Faso, indications that President Blaise Compaoré may be grooming his younger brother, François, as a successor have stirred considerable controversy.

Constitutions should be followed strictly when a president or prime minister dies, says Adewalo Banjo, an expert in African development. Without the rule of law, he argues, there can be "constitutional somersaults which bear all the hallmarks of what ridicules Africa before the world."

Joyce Banda, previously vice-president, became Malawi's new president in April 2012 after the death of her predecessor, Bingu wa Mutharika. Although she had been constitutionally in line to fill the vacancy, some supporters of the late president initially tried to block her, but were stymied by popular agitation and donor pressure.

AP / Chaka Chikandi

Signs of progress

The rule of law certainly prevailed in Ghana after President John Atta Mills died in July. Unlike in Malawi, there was never any doubt as to who should take charge. Vice-President John Dramani Mahama took over the mantle of leadership in line with constitutional requirements and promptly rallied a distressed nation. Ghana's seamless transition reflected the strength of its democratic system, in which ruling parties have twice handed over power to the opposition, after electoral defeats in 2000 and 2008.

Nevertheless, while a strong democratic tradition can facilitate smooth successions, considerations of political power may get in the way. When Nigeria's Umaru Musa Yar'Adua died in May 2010, some Nigerians demanded that another northerner

see page 22

INTERVIEW

After Africa's wars, a 'new day' for building peace

UN's Judy Cheng-Hopkins on peacebuilding work in Africa

Concerned about the fragile state of countries that have recently emerged from war — and their vulnerability to new bouts of violence — the UN in 2005 established the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), an intergovernmental body led by member states. The PBC currently has six countries on its active agenda, all of them in Africa (Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and the Central African Republic). Also in 2005, the UN set up the Peacebuilding Support Office, as a secretariat for the PBC. Since 2009 that office has been headed by Assistant Secretary-General Judy Cheng-Hopkins. From Malaysia, she has had wide experience in various UN food relief, refugee and development agencies, including working in East and Southern Africa for a decade for the UN Development Programme. In October, shortly after a visit to assess UN peacebuilding projects in Burundi, Ms. Cheng-Hopkins spoke with *Africa Renewal*'s managing editor, Ernest Harsch, about the challenges facing post-war Africa.

Judy Cheng-Hopkins visiting a youth centre in Gihanga, Burundi, a peacebuilding project supported by the UN.
UN Burundi

Africa Renewal **It has now been a few years since the Peacebuilding Commission and your Peacebuilding Support Office were set up. Do you see any tangible progress in those countries where the UN has been most active in peacebuilding activities?**

Judy Cheng-Hopkins In peacebuilding, six years, seven years is a very short time. These are fragile states, with weak institutions, that have emerged from decades of civil war. That makes it doubly hard to do anything right. Having said that, the two countries on the agenda [of the PBC] the longest, Sierra Leone and Burundi, are actually not in a bad place today.

Sierra Leone will have elections later this year [2012], if all goes well, and will pass a new threshold. We started a lot of nascent institutions, like an anti-corruption commission and a human rights

commission. They're starting to do their work.

In Burundi, there have been very few security incidents, whereas in the past there were a lot more. When I was previously in Burundi two years ago, I saw hardened combatants, young men with that hungry look in their eyes, a bit angry, a bit confused over what we were trying to do with them. Fast forward to two years later, to go to a site where a lot of them were involved in drying fish for sale, to see them in agricultural projects, to see how their lives have changed, you really feel quite satisfied that what you've done has gone right.

Africa Renewal **One goal in the establishment of the UN's peacebuilding institutions was to better coordinate interventions by both UN and non-UN actors. How has that been going?**

Judy Cheng-Hopkins Within the UN system, we already have a system of resident coordinators or the senior representatives of the Secretary-General coordinating, and even that is hard enough. So to expect a Peacebuilding Commission chair, who is not resident [in the post-conflict country], who comes to visit one, two or three times a year, who does not even have a mission in-country, is a challenge in terms of continuity on the ground, to finish what you are doing. I'm the first to admit it.

Lately, we've been a lot more careful. Look at the case of Liberia, where we've picked Ambassador [Staffan] Tillander, who is from Sweden. Sweden has a very large investment in Liberia, a big mission and a keen interest in making sure there is coherence and coordination. So it's a lot easier for Ambassador Tillander, who sits in New York, to actually carry out that role.

A fish-drying enterprise in Gitaza, Burundi: There is no short-cut for creating jobs in countries emerging from war.

UN Burundi

AR **Talking to civil society activists in Africa, one often hears a complaint that the donor community, including the UN, often comes in with a cookie-cutter approach, simply applying solutions that have worked in other countries, without consulting enough with local communities and civil society to learn the specific realities on the ground. Any reaction?**

JCH First of all, I don't think the cookie-cutter approach is applicable anymore. After 50 years of development cooperation, people have learned that you can't just transport one model onto another country. So that's not it. But I think they've got a point though: that we don't consult enough with civil society.

As far as we are concerned, I know that whenever I go into the field I insist on seeing people in civil society. The problem though is that civil society is huge. Who are we talking about? The one who you are talking to, can he say that he represents five or six organizations? What do they represent, thematically or in terms of membership, so that we can really move forward in a productive way?

If you want to move beyond protests, if you want to participate, you need an organization. A lot of what we are trying to do is actually help these [civil society] groups to organize. Out of that, I hope, comes leadership for the future of the country.

AR **In many of these countries, corruption was a major issue aggravating the problems that led to war in the first place, and these states still face difficulties in fighting corruption. How does that affect their aid prospects?**

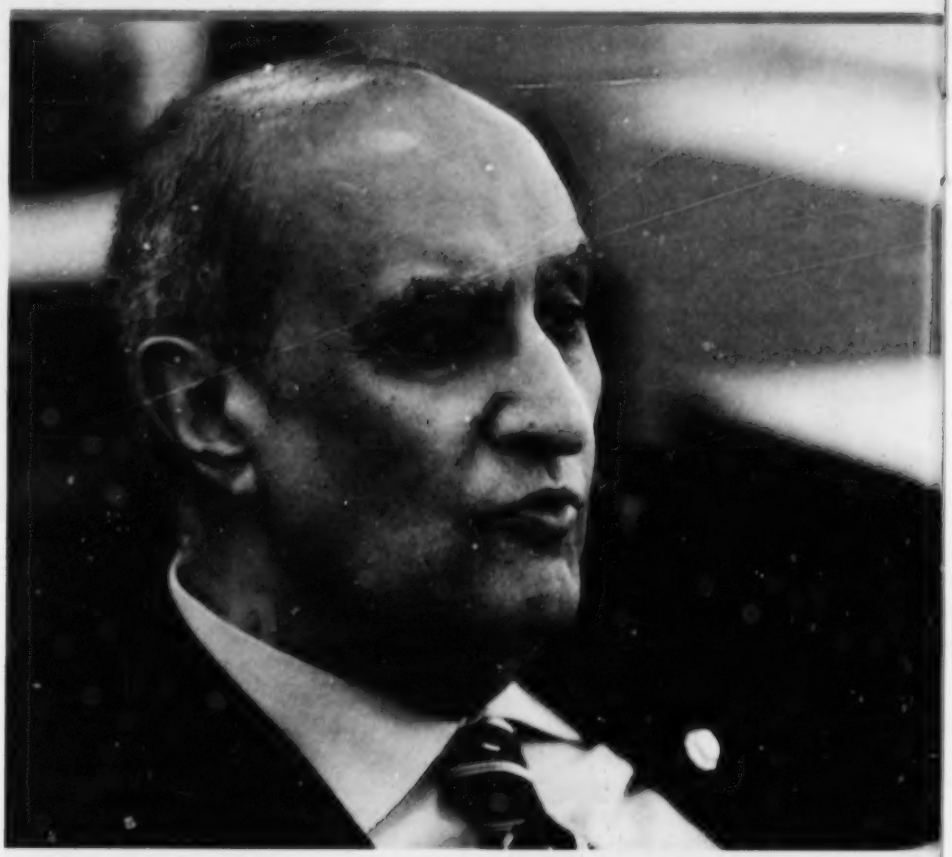
see page 22

INTERVIEW

'Ensure that everyone benefits from economic gains'

Interview with Maged Abdelaziz, UN special adviser on Africa

In May 2012, Maged Abdelaziz was appointed as the UN's new special adviser on Africa, at the level of under-secretary-general. As head of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), he is in charge of advocating for African development internationally and helping coordinate the efforts of UN agencies and departments in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union's continental plan for political, economic and social advancement. Although new to his post, he is no stranger to the global community's interaction with Africa. As part of a long diplomatic career on behalf of his native Egypt, he was that country's permanent representative to the UN in New York for the seven years just prior to his most recent appointment, and in that capacity served as vice-president of the UN General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, among other duties. As OSAA prepared for new General Assembly debates on Africa in October, he shared some of his thoughts with *Africa Renewal*.



UN Special Adviser on Africa Maged Abdelaziz: Mobilizing more financial resources from within African countries is a major goal of the African Union.

Africa Renewal / Bo Li

Africa Renewal **What are some of the greatest challenges in trying to get the international community to deal with Africa on its own terms, according to the continent's own priorities?**

Maged Abdelaziz We are seeing the remnants of the economic and financial crisis and its impact on development activities. As NEPAD is built not on aid but on partnership between Africa and the donor communities, African countries would expect more investment, more industrialization and thus more employment, more social integration and more social and economic coherence. But unfortunately, there is a lack of funds on this front and a decline in the percentage of aid.

A lot of commitments have been made. But there is lack of implementation. If you take it back to the 2005 Alberta summit [of the Group of Eight industrialized countries], up to now only 25 per cent of the G-8 Action Plan on Africa has been implemented. Of $65 billion that was going to be used for investment in Africa [annually], only about $23 billion has been delivered.

How to deal with these challenges is to try to integrate Africa's priorities, as defined in the thematic areas of

NEPAD, into the economic and social and security priorities of the United Nations. The chance for that is coming, because we are starting to shape the post-2015 development agenda [2015 being the end of the target period for the Millennium Development Goals]. And we played a significant role as OSAA in supporting African negotiators in Rio [at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development] to try to achieve the maximum of what they could achieve out of the unified African position.

AR NEPAD's focus is not just on aid, but also investment and trade. Yet the decline in aid, in the wake of the financial crisis in the US and Europe, has nevertheless been a blow. In that situation, what can African countries do to better mobilize their own resources, and to better manage what they have by combating corruption and stemming the flow of African funds abroad?

MA Well, in order for Africa to use its money better, it should have the money first. The concentration, as you say, of NEPAD is not on aid. It is on trade, investment and industrialization. And through these we can have better employment, better health care, better services and other things. Mobilizing resources from within African countries has been one of the major targets of the African Union, which has established a high-level panel on the mobilization of resources in African countries.

You need good governance at the same time. There are some African countries that have 5 per cent or 6 per cent or even 8 per cent growth. But this growth does not trickle down to the population, and the people who are below the poverty line are increasing more and more. So if you look at it from up there, you see that a country may be growing, doing among the best economic performance, but if you look at how this is affecting the socio-economic structure of the country, it comes at the level of certain people and stops there.

This happened in my country, in Egypt, where we had about 5 per cent or 6 per cent growth a year. But those who benefited were only the business-people who controlled the economy at the top. At the same time, we had 40 per cent of the people below the poverty line. Governance should be strengthened to ensure that everybody benefits from the economic gains that are coming.

And corruption. There is a high-level panel established by the African Union on combating corruption and ensuring that there are no kickbacks and no funds that should be going outside of the country. But that also requires some commitment at the international level, from the big economic powers. Because most of those moneys that are being smuggled out of African countries are going to bigger economies, they are not going to smaller economies.

Also to assist African countries, control over natural resources is very important. Most African countries export natural resources as raw material, and then re-import them at five or six times the price. If we can use natural resources for the benefit of Africa — that multiplying the price six times is for the benefit of the African people — then we will be doing better in African resource mobilization.

Nigerians throng outdoor market in Lagos. To avoid political and social tensions, the benefits of economic growth must reach ordinary Africans.

Reuters / Juda Ngwenya

AR You've alluded to the Arab Spring and the tensions that can be caused by poverty amid high economic growth rates. The other side of the Arab Spring was dissatisfaction with the lack of political inclusion, limits to democracy and political repression. Do you think the events in the north of the continent have been a wake-up call to the remaining authoritarian regimes in sub-Saharan Africa?

MA It is definitely a wake-up call to everybody. Not only for the autocrats in Africa. It is a wake-up call for all autocratic regimes. There is a political aspect to it and there is an economic aspect. The political aspect is that if you stay in power for a long time, there could be a negative impact. The economic part is that as long as people are not happy economically, they are going to revolt. And if you combine both together, then you have big revolutions, as you had in North Africa. Yes, it is a wake-up call.

Reconstructive surgery brings hope to survivors of genital cutting

A patient in Sierra Leone awaiting surgery to correct fistula, a condition often caused by FGM. Alamy / Celia Mannings

New advances can give women more normal lives

By **Jocelyne Sambira**

Tonte Ikoluba was 13 years old when her grandmother came to her family home to circumcise her. She remembers it as if it were yesterday. Her grandmother coaxed her and told her not to worry. It was important she go through the rite, she was told, in order to become a respectable woman and increase her chances of getting married some day.

"I closed my eyes tight and tried to gather my courage," she said. She wanted to wait a little bit, but her grandmother and another woman held her down.

Tonte does not like talking about that day. The memory is too painful. She was scared. Her sister had the procedure done before her, and she bled so much that she had to have a blood transfusion in the Malian hospital.

Female circumcision — otherwise known as female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) — is defined by the World Health Organization as "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia. It also involves any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons."

FGM/C is a millennia-long custom that practicing communities believe is an essential part of raising a girl properly. About 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGM/C, according to the World Health Organization. Some 92 million girls 10 years old and above who have undergone the practice are in Africa, the agency adds.

Health consequences

The practice has several immediate and long-term health consequences, says Marci Bowers, a gynaecologist in San Mateo, California. Many women like Tonte suffer for years after being circumcised because of scarring and frequent infections. The pain is constant, says Tonte. She is 35 years old and is still single, she says, because she cannot bear to have anyone touch her "down there." Not even a doctor.

Dr. Bowers told *Africa Renewal* that pain is a major problem for her patients. The majority have undergone the most severe kind of cutting, called infibulation, in which the clitoris is removed

and the labia are stitched together to form a cover over the vagina. Only a small hole is left for urine, menstrual blood, childbirth and intercourse.

Dr. Bowers is a surgeon who performs "reversal surgery" on her patients to repair the vagina and clitoris so that these women can have more normal lives. "The scar tissue that forms around the clitoris and encases it is uncomfortable. But in the cases where women have been infibulated, by dividing that infibulation, for the first time since the incision they are able to pass urine normally, they are able to pass menses normally. And they are able to have sex or childbirth without a constricting band that prevents those things."

She says the surgery is 100 per cent effective in alleviating pain for patients. "The relief that overwhelms these women has been one of the reasons women are glad they went through this surgery."

Advances in surgery

Reconstructive surgery for patients who have gone through FGM/C has been around for a long time. But the technique of clitoral repair surgery was only developed in 2004 by a French urologist, Dr. Pierre Foldès. It entails opening the scar tissue, exposing the nerves buried underneath and grafting on fresh tissue. The procedure reduces the chronic pain associated with FGM/C, allows women to regain clitoral sensitivity and even permits some to attain orgasm.

In Burkina Faso, where Dr. Foldès has trained several surgeons, the procedure has been offered since 2006. Previously, in 2001, the government sponsored and introduced a more general genital repair surgery, reports the National Commission Against Excision. Meanwhile, in an effort to make the clitoral repair surgery readily available in Africa, seven surgeons in Dakar, Senegal, recently received certification after training under Dr. Foldès and Senegalese oncologist Dr. Abdoul Aziz Kassé.

Dr. Bowers was also Dr. Foldès' pupil and has now volunteered to do similar work. She will be operating on Tonte Ikoluba for free, and has pledged to match every donation to the cause with her own money. Together with the Campaign Against Female Genital Mutilation (CAGeM), an international network devoted to countering FGM, she will help make the surgery available in Africa too. The organization was established in 1998 by a group of women doctors in Africa, in response to the high rate of infant and maternal deaths in communities that practice FGM/C. It is also working in New York: the practice is becoming more common in the US because of a growing population of immigrants from such communities.

CAGeM is building a hospital in Port Harcourt, in southern Nigeria. To be called Restoration Hospital, it will provide the surgery for free and be open to any patient from West Africa. Dr. Aberie Ikinko, director of the organization's US branch, explains: "We have already 400 women on the waiting list. We are also training the local doctors so that when we leave, they can continue to perform the surgeries for free."

Most women in Africa cannot afford the surgery, nor are they able to travel far. Dr. Ikinko told *Africa Renewal* that funds are being raised in New York to send supplies in preparation for the hospital's opening. CAGeM hopes Restoration Hospital will also be able to offer other free medical treatments for women, including operations for fistula, a hole that can develop over many days of obstructed labour, which is often caused by FGM/C.

Campaign for change

A high-level event at the UN General Assembly in September 2012 called for increased commitment and concerted action from governments to end the practice of FGM/C. A UN resolution aimed at intensifying global efforts to end FGM/C was approved for the first time on 26 November. Chantal Compaoré, the first lady of Burkina Faso who championed the resolution, hopes that African countries will sign it and take ownership of the ban.

After two decades of global efforts to end this practice, many communities are also now embracing change. Close to two thousand communities across Africa abandoned the practice in 2011 alone, according to a report by the Joint Programme for the Acceleration of the Abandonment of FGM/C. Set up in 2008 by the UN Children's Fund and the UN Population Fund, the programme seeks to spur change through a culturally sensitive, human rights–based approach that promotes collective abandonment of the practice.

Some previous strategies that regarded the rite as "barbaric" and "backward" met with resentment and backlash from local communities. Rather than ending FGM/C, such campaigns pushed supporters to simply hide the practice and scared them from seeking medical care, thereby placing young girls' lives at continued risk. Recently, educational efforts have been playing a more central role in campaigns to end the practice, with many activists choosing to present FGM/C as a public health issue and concentrating on the harmful and sometimes deadly effects it has on young girls and women.

Although there is renewed hope for a global ban on the practice, so far there has been little focus on solutions for the many girls and women who have already undergone cutting. The possibility of reconstructive surgery is therefore a godsend to young women like Tonte. "They took away part of my womanhood," she says. "I just feel very deprived. I want to be whole again."

Politics of succession

from page 15

be sworn in instead of Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner. Mr. Jonathan eventually prevailed.

Following the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in August, the succession process in Ethiopia was also successful despite initial hitches. There had been speculation that Mr. Meles' deputy, Hailemariam Desalegn, although a member of the ruling circle, could not be trusted with power because he did not belong to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a former militant group once led by the late president and still a powerful faction within the ruling party.

Ironically, the case for Mr. Hailemariam was made on the basis of ethnic considerations: to defuse tensions associated with the TPLF's domination over the years and to placate the Wolaytas, an ethnic minority that had never had a member at the summit of power. Ultimately, Ethiopia's ruling group rallied around Mr. Hailemariam, who was quick to promise a continuation of Mr. Meles's policies "without any change."

Ethiopia, Ghana and Malawi — the three latest cases of smooth succession following the death of a leader — provide evidence that Africa is gradually getting its transitions right. Succession can be a frequent problem even in developed and stable democracies, because it is all about political power, says Minion Morrison of Mississippi State University in the US. It is even more problematic if a leader dies in office. After the mess that surrounded the illness and death of Nigeria's Mr. Yar'Adua, writer and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka sent a simple message to African leaders: political succession should not be a matter of "do or die" politics.

After Africa's wars

from page 17

JCH I don't want to sound naive, but I think a good many of them see that this is a new day. This is past the Cold War, when aid was given willy-nilly because of other ends. Now donors are a lot more cognizant to be accountable and to deliver results. So every single country that has emerged from war realizes they need to have better, more transparent systems in order to continue attracting aid.

If you have the self-confidence of your vision for your country and you're clear about how transparently you're going to track the money they want to give you, why would a donor today wan' to turn away from that? You see that happening in Liberia now. They have that vision, in 2030, where they want to be a middle-income country. They say they're going for the most transparent way of tracking their budgets. So I think people like President [Ellen] Johnson-Sirleaf get it.

AR When a country has valuable natural resources, foreign investors are often interested in coming in. What are the challenges in ensuring that they don't simply come in and take what they want, without benefiting the country?

JCH We have six countries on the PBC agenda. Except for one, which also has potential wealth, I would say that the other four or five are rich, rich, rich in natural resources. Guinea is one, rich in tin and iron ore and bauxite. And yet, how many people are living on $2 a day? So how do you translate that wealth into social services, education and health for its people? That is the big challenge. The key is to strike the right balance between working for governments, but not scaring away the private sector. This is one area where we're very interested in working and in Guinea we're going to be starting very soon.

AR Aside from getting economies moving again over time, are there any shorter-term ways to tackle the problem of widespread youth unemployment in post-war countries?

JCH That's very tough. There really have to be some public works programmes if you're thinking of hiring a good number of people. In a way, that's what we're doing to reintegrate our ex-combatants, to put them in a public works programme. I see road repairs everywhere. Working with project implementers, such as UNDP or a non-government organization, we spend some time observing them, to see what their attributes are and if they're willing to work with one another. We then move to the second phase, to a cooperative, smoking fish or something else. Building them up and introducing a micro-enterprise programme, with their own savings, so that they can see that their own sweat and tears went into it, because then they value it more. There's no short cut to youth employment.

AR Any concluding comments?

JCH From what I see — and I'm not saying this romantically — but I really think there's a new day for a lot of Africa. There are so many unexplored areas of wealth in the continent. I would say that for a lot — not all — of the countries, unfortunately they had to suffer from bad leadership. But now we're seeing clean elections in one country after the other, producing leaders for the next phase. People realize it is a new day. So a lot of optimism for the century to come.

Texting your way to health

UN launches 'mHealth' initiative to fight diseases

BY JOCELYNE SAMBIRA

Imagine getting a text message telling you when and how to take your diabetes medication. Or a voice mail reminding you of your next mammogram. That's what two UN agencies are hoping to do with mobile technology to save lives, reduce illness and disability and bring down healthcare costs.

Increased access to communications technologies has given rise to the concept of "mobile health," or mHealth, involving the use of mobile phones for healthcare purposes. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) are currently testing mobile solutions to help people with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, cardiovascular maladies, respiratory diseases and cancer to better manage their conditions. The agencies also hope to encourage people to quit smoking, exercise more and eat healthier.

An estimated 36 million people die every year from NCDs in both developed and developing countries alike, according to WHO. They also account for a major share of health care needs and expenditures. In the next decade deaths from NCDs in Africa will jump by 24 per cent, the agency forecasts.

ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré believes that these diseases can be controlled through the intervention of mHealth initiatives. "Technological innovations are changing the landscape of disease prevention and control," he said. "The widespread availability of mobile technology, including in many of the least developed countries, is an exceptional opportunity to expand the use of e-health" (which includes computer, Web, mobile phone and other electronic technologies). He was speaking in Dubai at Telecom World 2012, a yearly event at which experts, policy makers and leaders come together to share ideas on the future of global telecommunications.

The initiative builds on current projects like WHO's use of mobile devices to gather data on tobacco use in 17 countries, covering half the world's population. Mobile phones have also been shown to help health care providers offer better care and deter harmful practices. In Kenya, according to a recent study, government health care workers were sent text messages coaching them on the proper malaria-treatment protocol. Health clinic workers can send alerts when they run low on medications to avoid stock shortages.

The government of Nigeria sends out SMS text messages to raise awareness about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. Panos / Jacob Silberberg

By early 2012, says ITU, there were more than 6 billion mobile phone subscriptions worldwide, with developing countries accounting for the lion's share of growth. In that context, mHealth could be one of the best ways to reach huge numbers of patients and care providers.

However, warns Harsha Thirumurthy, an economist whose research focuses on the link between health and economic outcomes in low-income settings, several aspects of the mHealth interventions warrant further research. In the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, he and Richard T. Lester strongly recommend a more thorough investigation of how text-messaging interventions compare with other interventions such as feeding programmes or home visits by community workers. They also bring up issues of cost — who will foot the bill remains unclear. If not the health care providers, are patients willing to pay for the service? Furthermore, it remains to be seen if mHealth can help induce behavioural change and get people to better adhere to treatment regimens for diseases like malaria and tuberculosis. ●

Huge leap in African ICT development

Three African countries have made the most progress in adopting information and communications technology, according to a new report by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). In its annual flagship report, *Measuring the Information Society 2012*, the UN agency notes that Rwanda, Kenya and Ghana have increased efforts to bridge the so-called "digital divide."

Meanwhile, the overall cost of ICT services is down by 30 per cent, reports the agency. Although fixed-broadband Internet services showed the biggest decline in average prices, by 75 per cent, mobile broadband continues to display the sharpest growth. Over the past year, mobile broadband grew 40 per cent worldwide and 78 per cent in developing countries, the report notes.

Despite the surge in mobile-broadband subscriptions, notes Brahima Sanou, director of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, prices still remain too high in low-income countries. "For mobile broadband to replicate the mobile-cellular miracle and bring more people from developing countries online," he says, "3G network coverage has to be extended and prices have to go down even further."

Meanwhile, Rwanda continues to enjoy its standing as number one in East Africa, as ranked by the UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development. In 2012 it took seventh place among all African countries with active mobile-broadband subscriptions. Rwanda's policy is to increase mobile connectivity in rural areas and make it affordable to the masses. A government-run portal, the Rwanda Development Gateway, says that the country is "determined to take full advantage of the digital revolution" to grow the country's economy. ●

Using mobile apps to spur social change

BY ARAO AMENY

Want to report a problem to an elected official in your community? There is a mobile application, or "app," for that. Want to bring attention to a pothole that needs fixing? There's an app for that too. With the explosion of mobile phones in Africa, Africans are catching the app fever. (An app is a piece of software that can run on electronic devices like mobile phones, computers or MP3 players).

In Kenya, under the slogan "fix my community," people are using an app named Huduma to denounce inadequate or missing public services. With it they can send a text message from their phones to alert elected officials and community activists to problems such as broken water pipes or report a doctor who is absent from a public hospital. Huduma's popularity has grown to the point that members have meet-ups, organized through the social-networking tool Facebook, to talk about pressing issues. The citizen-driven platform, created by the Kenyan-based company Sodnet-Infonet (Social Development Network Innovations), has recently been extended to Uganda, Mozambique and Nigeria.

Another app that is changing how ordinary Africans interact, connect and engage with their educational system is Not in My Country. The Ugandan-based user-generated platform, relying on data contributed by individual website users, is an untraceable and anonymous online space to report corruption at university campuses. Since reporting corruption can be risky, the founders of Not in My Country hide their identities, but remain active on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter to encourage audiences to report incidents — and thus improve the quality of higher education in Uganda. ●

New mobile phone applications are making it easier for citizens to alert officials to problems, expose corruption and prompt reforms. Africa Media Online / Sandy Bailey

Africa Watch

For better quality education in Africa – BY KINGSLEY IGHOBOR

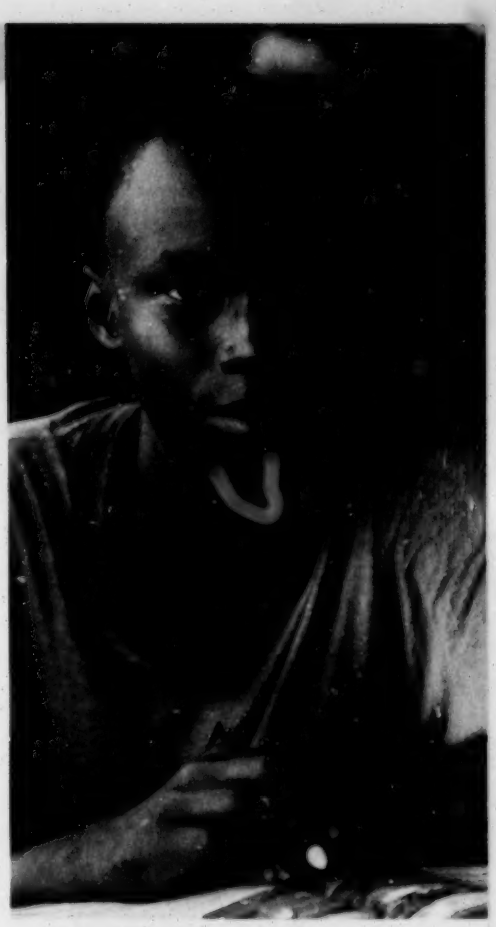
Amid continuing calls to increase primary school enrolment in Africa, a new report urges greater emphasis on the quality of what students learn. The Africa Progress Panel, a policy think tank chaired by Kofi Annan, a former UN secretary-general, noted in September that "many of the children in school are receiving an education of such abysmal quality that they are learning very little." Its report, entitled *A Twin Education Crisis Is Holding Back Africa*, says that Africa's children are leaving school "lacking basic literacy and numeracy" and without "21st century skills."

The report argues that while African governments have rightly stressed the importance of macroeconomic growth, such growth can only have a lasting impact if the continent's people have the necessary skills and capabilities.

The report recommends a three-step solution. First, African countries must strive to meet the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. Second, they must pay more attention to the quality of education. And third, they should ensure that poverty, living in rural or conflict regions, or being female do not impede children's education.

According to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the percentage of African children in primary school increased from 60 per cent in 2000 to 76 per cent in 2009, while the number of children out of school dropped from 42 million to 30 million. The panel report highlights progress in a number of countries. Tanzania had more than 3 million out-of-school children in 2000, but is currently "within touching distance of universal primary education." It adds: "From Burkina Faso to Ethiopia, Mozambique, Senegal and Zambia, one country after another has made a breakthrough in enrolment."

Still, Africa as a whole may not meet the 2015 MDG education target. "If the trend from 2005 to 2009 is continued, there will still be 17 million [children] out-of-school in 2025," maintains the report.



For Africa to thrive in the 21st century, its students must be much better equipped with the necessary skills and capabilities.

Panos / Giacomo Pirozzi

Mr. Annan said, "Given the critical place of education in poverty reduction and job creation, we urge governments to deliver on the commitment to provide education for all by 2015 and to strengthen their focus on learning achievement."

No SMS incitement to violence in Kenyan elections

In an effort to help forestall violence in the March 2013 general elections in Kenya, the Communications Commission of Kenya is requiring politicians to submit for screening all short message service (SMS) texts for bulk dissemination. The commission is also asking mobile service operators to block any SMS texts that it deems may incite violence.

The new rules, which some consider overly stringent, stipulate that prepared text messages, which must be in KiSwahili and English, should be submitted to mobile telephone service operators 48 hours before scheduled dispatch. The messages also must be authorized by political parties and accompanied by signed copies of their registration certificates.

The Kenyan government is seeking to avoid what happened in the 2007–08 elections, when hate messages were rampantly disseminated through SMS, helping to fuel violence that killed about 1,300 persons, reports IRIN, the UN humanitarian news service.

Kenya is not the only country to clamp down on text messages. Following post-election violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in December 2011, that government ordered mobile

phone service providers to block all text messages.

There are concerns, however, that a blanket ban on text messages could also block efforts to prevent violence. Following the SMS ban in the DRC, Daniel Solomon, a blogger, started an online petition to reverse the ban and quickly collected thousands of signatures. He argued that Kenya's post-election violence was lessened because peace activists were able to put out their own messages through SMS.

"SMS-based crowd-sourcing methods have become an essential tool of election monitoring and mass atrocities prevention in conflict zones," Mr. Solomon maintains. "With few journalists reporting from the ground in the DRC, SMS technology represents the only opportunity for an active stream of information from grassroots actors and civil society."

For now, Kenya's new rules affect only politicians and political parties. This will permit election monitors and civil society organizations to continue using SMS to sensitize people against violence.

Desmond Tutu honoured for 'speaking truth to power'

No former African head of state will receive the Mo Ibrahim prize for African leadership in 2012 because "none met the criteria needed to win this award," announced the selection committee. Those criteria include providing exceptional leadership and leaving office when the country's constitutional term limit ends. But the Mo Ibrahim Foundation announced that a $1 million special grant would be awarded to veteran anti-apartheid fighter Archbishop Desmond Tutu, for "speaking truth to power."

Since it was launched six years ago by Mr. Ibrahim, a Sudanese-born mobile communications entrepreneur and philanthropist, the prize is normally given to former leaders "for transformation of their countries and citizens' lives during their tenure." It consists of $5 million, paid over a period of ten years, $200,000 annually for life thereafter and another $200,000 per year to support the leaders' "public interest activities."

So far, the prize has been awarded to three former leaders: Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique in 2007, Festus Mogae of Botswana in 2008 and Pedro Verona Pires of Cape Verde in 2011. There were no winners in 2009 and 2010. John Githongo, an anti-corruption fighter from Kenya, said "it is absolutely no surprise whatsoever" that there was no winner again in 2012, given the shortage of exceptionally good leaders in Africa.

In deciding to give a one-time special prize to Mr. Tutu instead, the foundation cited his long work in promoting peace, human rights and social justice in both his native South Africa and around the world. According to Beninese singer Angelique Kidjo, who presented the award at a ceremony in Dakar, Senegal, Mr. Tutu "continues to show himself to be the scourge of injustice, ready to rock the boat if necessary and speak out against those political leaders who he believes have let down their citizens and the wider world."

Appointments

UN Photo / Paulo Filgueiras

Adama Dieng of Senegal has been named as the UN Secretary-General's special adviser on the prevention of genocide. A long-time jurist, Mr. Dieng previously was secretary-general of the International Commission of Jurists, helped establish the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and participated in the drafting of the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. In his new position, he replaces Francis Deng.

UN Photo / Mark Garten

The UN Secretary-General has appointed **Leila Zerrougui** of Algeria as his special representative for children and armed conflict. Just prior to this position, she was deputy head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and before that worked in various UN human rights positions and sat on Algeria's Supreme Court.

UN Photo / Marco Castro

Mr. Romano Prodi of Italy has been named the Secretary-General's special envoy for Africa's Sahel region, at which he will work with Sahelian countries and their international partners to address the region's crisis, with an initial focus on Mali. Mr. Prodi has had a long career in international diplomacy and in academia. He was prime minister of Italy from 2006 to 2008 and from 1996 to 1998, and served as president of the European Commission from 1999 to 2005.

UN Photo / Mark Garten

Asha-Rose Migiro of Tanzania has been appointed the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. She previously was UN deputy secretary-general, and in Tanzania served as that country's foreign minister, among other positions.

Africa Books

Radio Congo: Signals of Hope from Africa's Deadliest War by Ben Rawlence (Oneworld Publications, London, UK, 2012; 320 pp; pb £12.99)

From Bush to Bush: Journey to Liberty in South Sudan by Steven Wondu (East African Educational Publishers, Nairobi, Kenya, 2011; 272 pp; pb £24.95)

Africa and the War on Drugs by Neil Carrier and Gernot Klantschnig (Zed Books, London, UK; 2012, 184 pp; pb £12.99)

China and Africa: A Century of Engagement by David H. Shinn and Joshua Eisenman (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, USA, 2012; 544 pp; hb $69.95)

Sexuality and Social Justice in Africa by Marc Epprecht (Zed Books, London, UK, 2013; 208 pp; pb £12.99)

Exit the Colonel: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution by Ethan Chorin (Public Affair, New York, NY, USA, 2012; 384 pp; hb $29.99)

Slouching Towards Sirte: NATO's War on Libya and Africa by Maximilian Forte (Baraka Books, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2013; 300 pp; pb $27.95)

Business, Politics and the State in Africa: Challenging the Orthodoxies on Growth and Transformation by Tim Kelsall (Zed Books, London, UK, 2013; 208 pp; £18.99)

Domestic Violence and the Law in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, eds. Emily S. Burrill, Richard L. Roberts and Elizabeth Thornberry (Ohio University Press, OH, USA, 2010; 336 pp; hb $59.95, pb $28.95)

Eight Days in September: The Removal of Thabo Mbeki by Frank Chikane (Pikador Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2012; 230 pp; $22.00)

Cultured Violence Narrative, Social Suffering, and Engendering Human Rights in Contemporary South Africa by Rosemary Jolly (Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, UK, 2010; 184 pp; pb £ 65)

Mau Mau: The Kenyan Emergency, 1952-60 by Peter Baxter (Helion and Company, Solihull, UK, 2012; 72 pp; pb £14.95)

African Belief and Knowledge Systems: A Critical Perspective by Munyaradzi Mawere (Langaa RPCIG, Bamenda, Cameroon, 2011; 136 pp; pb £18.95)

Politics of Origin in Africa: Autochthony, Citizenship and Conflict by Morten Bøås and Kevin Dunn (Zed Books, London, UK, 2013; 160 pp; pb £18.99)

Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land Reform by Prosper B. Matondi (Zed Books, London, UK, 2012; 304 pp; pb £21.99)

A History of Pan-African Revolt by C.L.R. James (MP Press, Oakland, CA, USA, 2012; 160 pp; pb $16.95)

Reclaiming the Human Sciences and Humanities through African Perspectives, eds. Kofi Anyidoho and Helen Lauer (Sub-Saharan Publishers, Accra, Ghana, 2012; Vol. 1: 944 pp; pb £50.95; Vol 2: 738 pp; pb £50.95)

Afrikology, Philosophy and Wholeness: An Epistemology by Dani W. Nabudere (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 2011; 234 pp; pb £20.95)

Slavery and the Birth of an African City, Lagos, 1760–1900 by Kristin Mann (Indiana University Press, USA, 2010; 488 pp; pb $29.95, £20.99)

Anatomy of a South African Genocide: The Extermination of the Cape San Peoples by Mohamed Adhikari (Ohio University Press, Ohio, USA, 2011; 129 pp; pb $16.95)

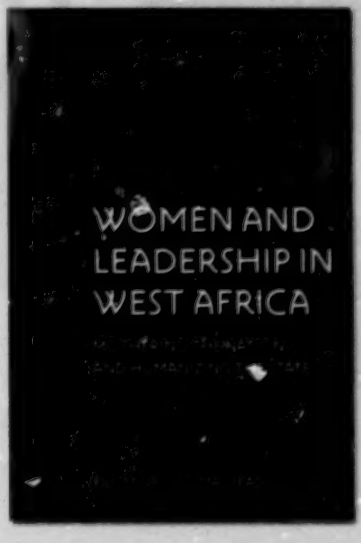
Decentralization in Cameroon by Joseph Owona (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2012; 166 pp; pb €16.63, ebook €13.13)

BOOK REVIEW

Women and Leadership in West Africa: Mothering the Nation and Humanizing the State

by Filomina Chioma Steady (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, USA, 2012; 284 pp; hb $95)

In Africa, leadership is a critical issue that often divides more than it unites. African leaders, most of whom are male, have often been dismissive of women who aspire to leadership, while very few academic studies on African leadership have focused on its gender aspects. Filomina Chioma Steady, a professor of Africana studies who is also an expert on gender, seeks to address this gap in her latest work, *Women and Leadership in West Africa*.

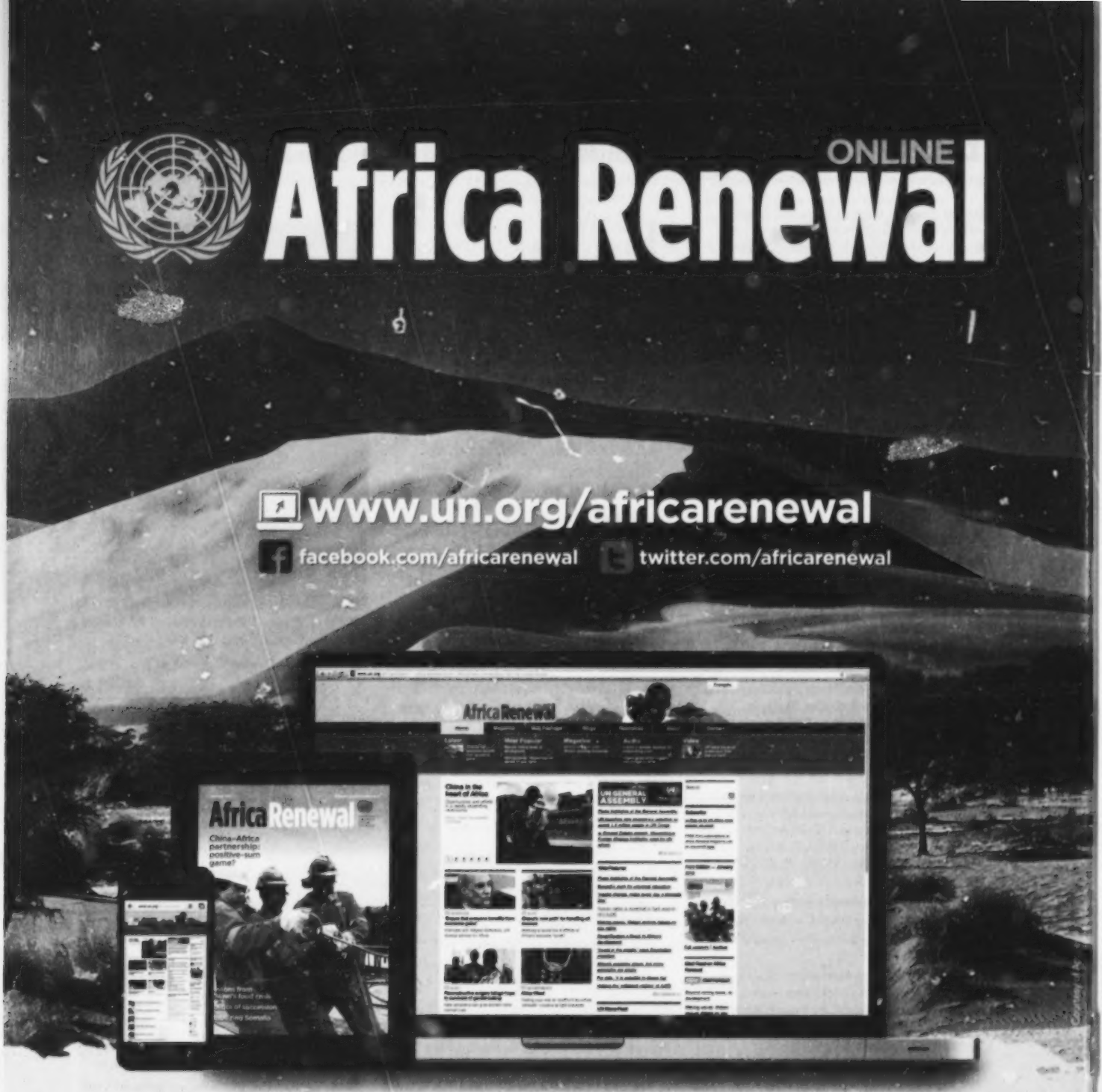


Ms. Steady explores the history of female leadership in Africa from Cleopatra to Nefertiti and Queen Amina of Kano to Queen Zinga. Her study, which draws on indigenous and post-colonial approaches, is supported by field research in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Although the book is at times a bit academic, it is well developed and organized, relying on both interviews and historical research.

Besides their common geographical location, the three African nations she focuses on share historical and cultural features that have contributed to the rise of women to positions of power. In Sierra Leone, legendary female chiefs such as Madam Yoko ruled for many decades at the end of the 19th century, while Liberia became the first African country to elect a female head of state in 2005 (President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf) and in Guinea Rabioatou Serah Diallo was appointed as deputy prime minister in 2010.

Ms. Steady seeks to highlight key factors that have promoted female leadership in these "male-dominated, authoritarian, and war-prone" countries. She links motherhood with peace as a "catalyst for female leadership" and notes that women's activism for peace focused on "social and economic development with equity and justice." Using the concept of "mothering the nation," Ms. Steady argues that female leadership can "humanize the state" and provide a powerful alternative to the male-dominated status quo.

— Rebecca Moudio



Your one-stop source for news and information about Africa and the UN

Africa is changing and so is Africa Renewal, with a new website, new features and a new commitment to supporting the partnership between Africa and the United Nations.

Africa Renewal Online. It's a new Africa. It's a new Africa Renewal.